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SPEECH

OF

WADDY THOMPSON,

OF

SOUTH-CAROLINA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES,

BEING

IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

ON

THE STATE OF THE UNION.

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SPEECH.

It is not my purpose, sir, to make a speech, but to throw together some "random recollections" of the last and present administrations. It may not be wholly unprofitable, especially, if it shall suggest to some of my former political friends to look well to the new associations which they are about to form. Brief it probably will, desultory it must be. My colleague (Mr. Pickens) has said that any party which acts upon the principles set forth in the report of the Committee of Ways and Means shall have his support. I understand him by this to mean, and only to mean, that he will support the measures which may be proposed for carrying out these principles, and not as pledging himself to support the re-election of those now in power. I hope that in so understanding my colleague I am not mistaken. I am sure I am not. Thus understood, I entirely agree with him. I have always thus acted whenever the administration has, by accident, staggered on a proper measure. I have voted for it. I shall continue to do so. More than this my colleague could not have intended. He had too often, and too fiercely, denounced those in power. He had uttered too many eloquent and burning anathemas against them as not only ignorant and incompetent, but as corrupt and profligate, to make it possible for him to unite with them without the amplest recantation—if not as an act of justice to them, as due to himself and the country. Besides, sir, there is another reason much more honorable to him, which would prevent it. He knows those in power—he knows them well—and has known them long; and if accident, or the necessities of their position, have driven them into a wise and proper policy, he well knows that when that necessity no longer exists, they will, by a natural proclivity, relapse into their former courses. Why this joy and exultation—this rapture I may say—at the *profession* of sound and just principles? Is this profession any new thing? Is there a single one of these principles—state rights, economy, retrenchment, anti-internal improvement, or any other that has not been constantly asserted in the messages and documents from the commencement of the late administration, and in practice as constantly and most flagrantly violated? All this I will prove. Is there any where a more admirable compendium of the doctrines of the States rights party than the messages of Gen. Jackson? the man who has done more to break down all the landmarks of the Constitution, and to consolidate all power in this Federal Government, than every other man who has preceded him.

A gentleman of Kentucky, formerly a distinguished member of this body, who said and did so many good things, that I have always regretted that he left Congress before I entered it, once said that Virginia would die some day of an abstraction. Sir, there was a profound philosophy in the remark, and it is true as applied to more states of the South than Virginia—we are destined to die—to be killed by abstractions. Profess our principles, talk of retrenchment, reform, state rights, and especially if you will add a word or two of state remedies and the right of state interposition, and adopt in practice what measures you please—force bills, tariffs, Cumberland roads, harbor bills, or whatever else you choose. And such, sir, has

been, and is now, the policy of this administration. To gull and catch the South with the profession of certain principles, and to secure other sections with the solid realities of acts in violation of every one of those principles. Their motto is that of Lady Macbeth—"Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it."

I have said that I would show that the late and present administrations have violated every single one of the great principles upon which Gen. Jackson came into power. I will add, sir, that never have the just expectations of patriotic and confiding friends been so cruelly disappointed, since the return of Charles the Second to England, when a noble minded and loyal people lined the roads from Dover to London with joyous and heartfelt greetings, and in the exuberance of their generous joy, freely forgiving all the past offences of his odious race in their happy visions of hope of the future. How that confidence was repaid who does not know. That heartless profligate rode on through this dense and living mass of loyalty and love as insensible to all these feelings as the horse that bore him—the nobler animal of the two. Since that day, I repeat, the just expectations of patriotic and devoted friends have not been so disappointed, or pledges so openly violated.

Shall we trust again to the hollow professions of these very same men. No, sir, the head of your party was once told by a distinguished Senator from Virginia—you have deceived us once, that was your fault—if you do it again, it will be ours. I said every principle. No, sir, there is one to which they have adhered with a noble fidelity. That famous maxim—"To the victors belong the spoils."

The general policy of the party cannot be more fitly illustrated than by the measure now under discussion, whilst forever prating of retrenchment and economy, they lavish thousands and millions on the Cumberland road, harbors, and other such objects, not only in violation of the Constitution, but of all their own professed opinions, and seek to atone for it by reducing an appropriation for an important arm of the national defence, the paltry sum of \$60,000, and by cheating mail contractors and other small employees of the Government.

A word or two as to this matter of internal improvement. If there was any one principle which more than another entered into the canvass which resulted in the election of General Jackson, it was the question of internal improvement; and, sir, what has been the result? I will tell you. That administration actually expended more money in internal improvement than all the preceding administrations from the foundation of the Government. In the Administration of his predecessor, an amount next to nothing was expended; but he was turned out for the enormity of holding an abstract opinion in favor of the power. His successor, who carries the exercise of that power to the most extreme and alarming extent, is not only to be excused, but that successor, or what is the same thing, his nominee and eleve, is to be confided in, notwithstanding other and weighty objections; because he makes similar promises. I reply to such promises as did old Quickly to Falstaff, "aye, and you said so before Sir John." A man may be borne down by a torrent which he cannot resist. He may be overcome by force, but if he bears himself rightly, and preserves his *mens sibi concia recti*, he may have a joy in defeat which even success cannot give. But for myself, I have no fancy for being cheated that makes one think meanly of himself.

How stands our present Chief Magistrate on this question of internal improvement? Did he not vote for placing turnpike gates on the Cumberland road? a power by far the greatest that has ever been asserted or attempted—the power of destroying the right of travelling, of the citizen in his own State, without the permission of, and paying tribute to, another Government.

But to come to matters of much more recent occurrence. Did he not, at the last session, sign a bill appropriating nearly two millions for clearing out harbors? A species of internal improvement which, whilst it is as unconstitutional as any

other, is infinitely the most to be deprecated, as it is necessarily local and partial : and must enure only to the benefit of the commercial sections, which are always the most wealthy, to the exclusion of the interior, the poorer sections, and those most needing these aids. Nay, more, sir, the benefit is not even local ; it is individual, and for the benefit mainly, of those owning the lands where the harbors are made. Again : did he not sign a bill making appropriation for the Cumberland road, and will he not continue to sign them as often as they are passed ? No one doubts it, and yet he professes to think these measures unconstitutional, and Southern men who do really think them so, and rise in wrath whenever they are before the House, recommend this Chief Magistrate to their friends of the South, as the special guardian and conservator of their peculiar principles. Why, sir, is all this ? Why have not these professions been carried out ? Are those who make them insincere ? Then they are not to be trusted. Are they sincere ? Then they have shown themselves incompetent, if for ten years, with a dense, compact and drilled majority of thirty or forty votes, instead of reform in these particulars, they have been running on from bad to worse.

There is another point upon which the South is urged to an embrace, which but lately was regarded as foul and leprous—the tariff. I can hardly persuade myself that there is any one, certainly no respectable number of politicians in this country, who do not regard that question as settled, and permanently settled. Some gentlemen speak of the compromise as ending in 1842. I regard it as beginning then, and that the intermediate time has only been a course of preparation. Whence the danger of renewed agitation ? The South is satisfied with it, bad bargain as it unquestionably was—a very bad bargain. But the point of honor was saved, and as Francis the First said after the battle of Pavia, it is all that was saved. The manufacturers are satisfied, as they have much reason to be, for they never were more prosperous. Whence then the danger ? There is none, sir, but from political agitators, who desire to use this topic as they have used it, and as they would use the most sacred and delicate of the institutions of public or of private life, as counters in their cheating and profligate games of personal ambition.

I understand the game, for a game it is, and I here, in my place, denounce it as it deserves. That there is one little corner, if no other, where just denunciation will be heeded. Those now in power are much indebted for that power to this very tariff subject—it has done them yeoman's service, and they desire to have again in their hands so powerful an instrument. They expect again to divide, as they have done, the Northern and Southern wings of the opposition, and still more, they calculate to gain favor with each party, as they have heretofore done, by professing different opinions in every different line of latitude—opposed to the tariff in the South—surprised in the North that any one could have doubted their support of that policy. Is it forgotten, sir, that Mr. Van Buren voted for the tariff of 1828. The bill of abominations ; one of those things, by which a wise and inscrutable Providence, works good out of evil. I do believe that the revolting enormity of that bill, enabled the South at last, to assail the whole policy as successfully as it did ; yes, sir, for this revolting measure, unconstitutional as his friends now admit it to be, he not only voted, but was in favor of the Force Bill ; to execute, by the bayonet, a law which he believed unconstitutional. Great God, sir, to what have we come ; are we men, bearded men, or children, that such language should be addressed to us ; such attempts to cheat and laugh at us. For mercy's sake, if you are determined to overcome us, do it in such a way as will leave us some little of our own self-esteem. Do not make of us, willingly, conscious dupes.

But, sir, the support of it was not all ; he was closetted, night after night, with the Southern gentlemen, consulting as to the best means of defeat-

ing the measure, and, to their perfect astonishment, voted for it. Here we see him voting for this most pernicious and unconstitutional measure and thinking it so, and in violation of other very high obligations. What was the excuse? He did it under the coercion of instructions from his Legislature—a New York Legislature—an Albany Regency Legislature, instructing him, who was confessedly their head, to do that to which his own inclinations and sense of duty were opposed. *Credat Judeus apella non ego.*

But this reason was only given at the South. If I am not wholly mistaken, at a public meeting, shortly afterwards in Albany, Mr. Van Buren professed himself in favor of a protective tariff, and expressed his surprise that any one should ever have doubted it. Because, forsooth, he owned twenty thousand sheep. Not influenced by any of those high and exciting topics of encouragement to our own native industry, of complete national independence, which, delusive and fallacious as they are, have something lofty and generous and exciting in them. Oh no, sir, not for any of these; but because he had twenty thousand sheep. He was amazed that any one should suppose it possible for a man who owned 20,000 sheep, to be opposed to the tariff. Truly a most sheepish reason.

Sir, if that disastrous measure is ever again to agitate this country, I desire some other dependence than that which shall be placed in any one man, and especially on a man who, when the country was on the eve of a civil war, was heard or thought of by no one. In that, or any other great crisis, other spirits are looked to, to direct the storm. I have no fears on that subject. It will not be revived. If it is, thank God, the whole South will be animated as one man, with the same self-devoting spirit as was heretofore one of the smallest of them, in the terrible conflict through which she passed. When denounced by her enemies, abandoned by friends, and deserted in the hour of peril by those who should have sustained, she trod, undismayed, “her war path” alone.

There is another subject too delicate to be lightly touched, and too important not to be alluded to. We are asked to rely upon this same individual for the protection of another and our greatest interest—whilst I will not deny that he has lately acted well on that subject, and would not insinuate that he has the slightest taint of abolitionism upon him; still I do want confidence in his disposition or his ability to meet a great crisis, to throw himself in the way of a bursting torrent—God has given the qualities necessary to this to few men, and he is not one of them. Possessed, although he unquestionably is, of many high endowments, I cannot however close my eyes to the fact, that his zeal in favor of the South has been in exact proportion as his star has waned in the North; and, although Mr. Van Buren has unquestionably acted well of late upon this subject, I cannot forget that he voted for the instructions under which Rufus King introduced the Missouri question into Congress—nor have I forgotten that I have seen a letter from him, about that time, to a political friend, in which in reference to those instructions he says ‘don’t be alarmed, it will benefit our party;’ I speak from memory, but believe those are the very words. Here again is another most sheepish reason: He would not do it from any generous and enlarged enthusiasm for human liberty, but because it would benefit the party. Yes, sir, to benefit a political party, our whole political fabric was made, from capitol to basement stone, to reel and totter, and patriots and philanthropists looked on with trembling horror, expecting to see topple in ruins the proudest and the last temple reared by human wisdom to human liberty. But there were those who looked on unterrified and unconcerned, “purring over sinister intrigues and petty stratagems.” It would benefit the party. Were there none of those honorable fears, “fears of the brave,” that the brightest hope of man might be extinguished forever—no one noble throb of filial devotion, no trembling concern for the dan-

gers of the republic—oh, no, if the country should survive the shock it would benefit the party. He felt unconcerned for all these, and played on his miserable game of party politics, unmoved amidst the throes and beatings of a convulsed and endangered state.

But, sir, if it is unpleasant to look on this side of the picture, there is another of a very different character. There has always been in our happy country, talents and virtues which have risen to the level of the great occasion that demanded them. It was so then. There were men who, cleansing themselves from every selfish feeling, without which no man ever performed a glorious action, with singleness and purity of heart, devoted themselves to restoring peace and quiet to the country and saving its glorious institutions, and they did so. The petty intriguers, who had commenced the agitation, slunk away in dismay, as certain unclean birds on the rising of the sun. But is it not, sir, rather too much that the man who was amongst the first to originate that dangerous agitation, should now be proclaimed as the only anointed saviour of Southern institutions, and he a slave holder himself, who quieted it, denounced as a dangerous agitator?

I do not believe that the eyes of our rulers are ever raised above the petty consideration of party tactics to the great and general interests of the country. A more striking instance of this has not occurred than in a note to the report of the Committee of Ways and Means. It is charged as an unnecessary extravagance, the additional appropriation for the Cherokee Indians, of two millions; and it is said that this increase was recommended by a committee of the Senate, of which Judge White was chairman. Now, sir, without any intentional disrespect to the honorable chairman, I pronounce that there is not one word of truth in the whole statement. It is not true. It did not originate in the Senate, and it never was referred to a committee, of which Judge White was chairman; but to the committee, of which Mr. Wright was chairman, an authority greater, no doubt, with the gentleman, but with few others than that of 'the just Aristides.' It is not true that there was any additional appropriation proposed. The proposition, originally, was made in this House, and that was not for an additional appropriation, but to allow the President to divert two millions of the five which were appropriated for the suppression of Indian hostilities, to the removal, peacefully, of the Cherokees, if the President should deem it expedient. This is the amendment. "Provided, that if the President shall ascertain that all dissatisfaction of further opposition on the part of any portion of the Cherokee Indians to the treaty of 1835 can be allayed or avoided, by allowing an additional compensation for lands ceded to the United States by said treaty, and that thereby the Government may be saved the expense of keeping up the large military force within the Cherokee country, now contemplated, he is hereby authorized to apply two millions of dollars of the sum appropriated by this act to that object."

What man that has a heart could object to this? It is a matter of feeling. I cannot speak for others, but I certainly do not envy the man, who would prefer to expend five millions in crushing a poor, helpless, and deeply injured people, and driving them from the home of their fathers in chains, and at the point of the bayonet, instead of two millions as a measure of peace, of kindness and conciliation. I know of nothing in our own, nor the history of any other people, more revolting than all the circumstances of that treaty. The partition of Poland was a disgusting act of brute force. But here is a combination of cruelty, oppression and force; and as if no element should be wanting in the hateful compound, fraud was superadded—and as if to remove the right of the Indians to complain of the fraud upon them, another fraud was perpetrated on our own Government, as is too manifest to admit of a doubt. The commissioners were first ordered only to treat with the majority of the nation. They applied to the Department to be autho-

rized to treat with the minority, but were refused. They had the boldness to apply again, and were again refused. They then sent a special messenger, Mr. Curry, to Washington, to communicate verbally—yes, sir, *verbally*—*Litera scripta manet*—with the Department, and communicate freely to the Secretary the views of the Commissioners, and to ask his assent. We have no evidence what those verbal communications were, but we do know that this special messenger returned, with the approval of the Department of the suggestions of the Commissioners, and that the treaty was instantly made with the minority—with one-sixteenth only of the nation, and the meanest portion of it. Who doubts that it was done in pursuance of the authority of the Secretary? They would not have dared to do it without, and in open violation of previous instructions—and yet when the instructions, under which the treaty was made, were called for in the Senate, all these verbal instructions were withheld—and it is thus that, I said, a fraud was practised on our own Government, as well as on the Indians.

It was under these circumstances of deliberate fraud and oppression, that a civilized and virtuous people, the remnant of a once powerful tribe, were about to be forced for ever from their homes and the graves of their fathers—a people, upon whom our own Government had made a great and successful experiment. There is nothing in history which approaches the gigantic strides of this people, in the career of civilization. In less than the fourth of a century, a perfectly barbarous people were transformed into one altogether civilized—a virtuous, industrious and prosperous people. But there was a stern and inexorable necessity that they should remove. I felt that necessity, and as a measure of practical humanity to the Indians themselves, and all questions of humanity are practical questions, I voted for the appropriations. But the first wish of my heart was, that if the blow must fall upon them, that it should fall in all mercy and tenderness. That no act of kindness should be wanting to soothe the wound which we made, I would, myself, have most cheerfully given them five times as much, as a peace offering to my own conscience. Much more readily would I vote, as I did, to divert two millions from military purposes to those of peace and conciliation. The measure, however, did not originate with Mr. Bell, but with the Secretary of War; and I should be happy to know that a letter which I wrote to that officer, first suggested it. I should be proud of it, with whomsoever the idea did originate; nothing could be more humane and honorable in its conception, nor more advantageous in its results. That man's heart is not rightly attuned, which would not prefer, in any case, but especially in this, measures of peace to those of harshness and force, and who would object to diverting means which had already been provided for the hunting and massacre of these poor creatures to purposes of charity. If one drop of blood had been shed, it would have cried to Heaven against us.

But, sir, a word or two more as to economy. You see that my remarks are as desultory as I told you they would be, as I speak without notes or other preparation—altogether an affair of Guerilla cavalry. Economy, yes, sir, that is once more the catchword. There is some boldness, at least, in this. If there is any thing redeeming in it, it is the audacity of an administration which has swelled the regular expenditures in ten years, from thirteen to nearly thirty-six millions, venturing to talk of economy. Economy! I should think the word if it did not blister their lips, would crimson their cheeks. What single item of public expenditure has not been increased, and on the regular, and almost avowed, principle of increasing the value of public offices as rewards to clamorous and broken down politicians as the spoils of victory—spoils not torn from conquered enemies, but from their own confiding country. Well, sir, in this they exhibit their usual tact and skill; they know that the true sensorium of liberty is the pocket.

We have seen the people of this country standing by quietly and as if unheeding, and seeing one by one every entrenchment of the public liberty broken

down, and all its ancient guarantees destroyed, with not only perfect indifference, but with increased confidence in those who did it, at last aroused from a sleep, that seemed lethargic, by the supposed loss of a few millions—one encroachment after another—one usurpation after another, in quick and terrible succession have we seen occur, and pass by us like a summer's cloud. Their very frequency secured their impunity. One enormity was hardly exposed before another, and a worse one trod on its heels, and the first became an old story. Usurpations so frequent and important, as really, in my judgment, to have caused an almost entire civil revolution. And I say in the presence of that God, whom I would not dare to call upon to attest a falsehood, that there is no people in Christendom purporting to be free, in my judgment, which has been as badly governed for the last ten years as our own, by as weak, as ignorant, and incompetent men. Nor do I believe that in any limited monarchy in Europe would usurpations and acts have been tolerated, which have been here, in this Republic of ours. But the great body of the people are now, thank God, aroused, and the cry is, once more, economy—retrenchment—and by whom is it raised? By a party coming into power on those same watchwords—a party, the great leader of which in the Senate, offered resolutions in 1836, calling on the Secretaries of War and the Navy to inform the Senate, what was the *greatest* amount which they *could* expend. This is something new, at least, in public or private affairs. Prudent men, in either, inquire what is the smallest sum that will do; it is only the profligate spendthrift who seeks for objects to squander his money on. But never before was such an idea broached by any public man. Here it is:

On motion by Mr. Benton, and by unanimous consent,

Resolved, That the Secretary of War be directed to inform the Senate what is the maximum amount that can be beneficially expended *annually* upon the construction of fortifications, provided the corps of engineers is increased according to the bill which has passed the Senate, and that the whole appropriation for each fort is made at once, to be drawn for in annual instalments as required by the progress of the work. Also, that he inform the Senate what is the maximum amount which can be beneficially expended *annually*, on the objects of expenditure within the Ordnance department, as detailed in the report of that department of March, 8, 1836: *Provided*, The appropriations for each object be made at once for a series of years, to be drawn for annually, until the object is accomplished.

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Navy be directed to inform the Senate what is the maximum amount which can be beneficially expended annually, towards completing the naval defences of the country, embracing, 1, ordnance and ordnance stores; 2, gradual increase of the navy and collection of materials; 3, repairs; 4, navy yards and docks, and other incidental heads of expenditure: *Provided*, The appropriations for the expenditures be made at once for a series of years, to be drawn from the Treasury annually, as needed.

And this by the *leader* of a party which came into power to reform the extravagance of their predecessors. To retrench the extravagance of thirteen millions a year down to thirty-six, and in one instance forty-six millions. Blessings often come upon us in disguise, and never was there a more fortunate circumstance in the political life of any man than was that to the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. Adams,) that he should have been turned out of office by Gen. Jackson. There were many acts of that administration which I disapprove, and few of its principles with which I agreed. But upon some great and leading matters, especially that of economy and accountability of devotion of the time and talents of able men, exclusively to their public duties, and above all a stern determination to proscribe no subordinate officer for opinion sake, the highest eulogy which history can pass upon it will be a contrast with that which succeeded it. The gentleman from Massachusetts, and myself are, I believe, more frequently opposed in debate than any two members on this floor—many more cuffs than compliments have passed between us. But, sir, if I had any feeling of unkindness to him personally, which I have not, I should be the more disposed to say what I have as it is no more than justice.

And now as to the great question of the day, the question of "deliverance and liberty," as it is called, whether in irony and burlesque, or in sober seriousness, it is difficult to say. There are some strange things in the President's message on this subject. I call upon the gentlemen of the South to notice them. Those gentlemen who first gave their support to the "royalists, corruptionists and usurper," as they were wont to call them on account of a concurrence, honest, no doubt, on their part, in their views on this finance question. I told some of them then what it would come to. That if it was in itself a good thing, they were going into it under bad auspices, and with those who would not stick to it one moment longer than it was their interest to do so. How has my prediction been fulfilled? The President tells you, in his message, that the Government should be left free to select banks or individuals as its fiscal agents. Aye has it come to that? The advocates of the separation tell you that the power of the banks is so very great, that the public liberty can never be maintained against the terrible combination of bank and state. That you must give the Government no control over the banks, or else that the great power of the banks will be wielded in subserviency to the Government; and, therefore, say they, you must not think of selecting banks, owned by the states themselves, where the patronage will enure to the benefit of the whole state—or where that cannot be done, to have banks selected and the terms of their agency fixed by Congress. When in fact and truth, the President will have no more power than in the payment of a pension. But that it is perfectly safe and harmless to have nothing fixed by Congress, but to leave the whole matter to the unrestricted and unregulated discretion of the Executive.—Where there is no discretion in the exercise of a power or the choice of agents, there can be no patronage; there is nothing to stimulate the hopes of one man, nor to excite the fears of another. But give, as proposed to the President, the power to use the banks, or not, and if these agencies for the Government are half as important as they are represented to be, you at once place the banks at the feet of the Executive, debased suppliants and subservient vassals. Regulate it by law, and there can be none of the blandishments of Executive patronage on the one hand, nor the terrors of Executive proscription on the other. But it is, indeed, a notable remedy for the dangers of Executive patronage and power, to double that patronage and power. Is it Machiavelism, or a want of knowledge of the subject? One or the other it must be. The President attributes the restoration of the currency to a state of soundness, amongst other things, to the stern determination of the Government not to deposite its funds except on special deposite—on special deposite—a more impudent imposture was never attempted upon the country. The President may not himself have known it. What do we understand by the term special deposite? Every one knows that we mean a deposite for safe keeping, and not to be used by the banks. Does the Secretary mean this? Not at all. He should have then told us what he did mean, and not have thus misled us. What did he mean? He meant this, as drawn from him on cross examination: that it was a deposite not to be paid on demand, but at future and stipulated times. In other words, a credit given to the bank; a deposite more favorable to the banks than a general deposite, and all that was special in it was for the benefit of the bank.

Yes, sir, it is true, that all the money the Government has had for the last six months, has been on deposite with banks, and what is worse, with that monster of the apocalypse with seven heads and ten horns, the Bank of the United States. I say all, for the Government has been living from hand to mouth, and living at all only by the resource of the spendthrift after he has squandered his money, to have his bonds shaved. You have had no money but the proceeds of the bonds of the bank which have been sold. That is all; for you have struck down the struggling energies of the country. If your iron hand were one moment with-

drawn, they would rise up like the strong man from his sleep, and by their inappreciable resources and power would pour into your coffers overflowing revenues. But these resources are now dried up, and you maintain a stinted existence, from day to day, by shaving your bonds. And what is more, by the terms of that negotiation the monster has, I have not the least doubt, made more clear money than it ever before made in any one year from its connexion with the Government.

And thus ends the miserable humbug of separation—a humbug, to which I feel a hostility almost personal, because it is a humbug; and still more, because it is a humbug which has given me a good deal of trouble. I was told an anecdote the other day, which I will give to the House as I heard it. I do not vouch for it, but I believe it to be true. It is known that the negotiation with the Bank of the United States was not made by Mr. Woodbury—that would have been too bad, to have forced our great financier into a negotiation with the hated monster—the public nostrils could not have endured it—Mr. Poinsett was selected for this labor of love. I am told that after the matter was all arranged, Mr. Biddle said to him, well now, sir, the status of 1834 is restored; there is a reunion between the Government and my Bank; these second nuptials have been secret, it is true, but come out and acknowledge it, and make an honest woman of your bride. What must have been the feelings of the respective parties, the Administration and Mr. Biddle?

On the one side, ignorance, charlatanry and trick, driven from one expedient to another, and at last, forced to solicit the aid of an institution upon which, and all connected with it, they had been waging a ruthless and exterminating war. The other as calm as the breaking of a May morning on his beautiful villa on the Delaware, looking with pity, if not contempt, on his vanquished enemies, mingled with the shame and sorrow of a patriot, that his country should be thus governed.

I believe it is Cicero who says, that one of the greatest arts of an orator is, in the selection of his topics. In discoursing of the misdeeds of this Administration, that is difficult, their name is Legion, for they are many; but there are some others which I must notice. It is susceptible of proof, and soon will be proven, that during the suspension of specie payments, when the law of the land expressly forbade it, and when the administration party were clamoring for the rejection of the notes of banks which were promptly paid on demand; and when the notes of non-specie paying banks could not be received but in open violation of law, that such notes were habitually received in payment of duties with the knowledge and tacit sanction of the Department.

It may be remembered, that when the bill authorizing the issue of Treasury notes was under consideration, I opposed it—I believed it unconstitutional, and I think proved it to be so; at all events, the argument has never been answered. But, willing to raise the necessary supplies, I proposed a loan for two years, which it was well known could have been instantly disposed of at a premium. Some of my southern friends were horror struck that I should thus propose a new public debt. Well, sir, I did not see that a debt was any the less a debt, because we should have ten thousand instead of ten hundred creditors. But it was said, that my proposition would raise a permanent debt—a permanent debt redeemable in two years: but that the great advantage of these Treasury notes was that they would flow back into the public Treasury as rapidly as they were paid out.

Well, sir, what did the Government to this end; the returning speedily of these notes into the Treasury? I will tell you what I have been informed, and believe to be true. Did they pay them out to the creditors of the Government? not at all. But they employed brokers to dispose of them to banks, with the expectation, if not with the express understanding, that the banks would retain them, as the six per cent. interest which they bore, was as much as the bank would receive, if it loaned them out, and that they should not be thrown into the circulation, and

would not, therefore, return into the Treasury ; and this, after urging as the strongest argument in favor of their issue, their speedy return.

But for what were these Treasury notes exchanged? surely not for irredeemable bank rags. They would hardly have exchanged the paper of the Government, bearing interest, for the paper of broken banks, bearing none. Was it for specie, then, the Government was conniving at and encouraging the fraud which it so loudly denounced in the banks, of using and speculating on their specie whilst they refused to redeem their notes which were outstanding? But, sir, I have no doubt that bank notes were received in exchange. Bank notes were paid out by the Government; it must have got them somewhere; and to get them any where was in violation, not only of their professions, but of their duty. They had no right to receive the bills of banks which were not redeemed on demand.

There was a beautiful illustration of this hard money humbug, during the last summer, in Georgia. The troops, raised to execute the Cherokee treaty, were paid off, not in gold and silver, or Treasury notes, but in Georgia bank notes, (I am informed by more than one respectable man,) in the bills chiefly of the Ocmulgee bank, which were at a discount for other Georgia money. They demanded other money, but could not get it. A few days afterwards, there was a sale of some corn and bacon, which the agents of the Government had accumulated and which was not needed; then, sir, it was a different affair, gold and silver, or Treasury notes, could alone be received. The soldier who had toiled in the public service, and desired to purchase those supplies, which his absence from home had made necessary, could not pay the Government for them in the very money which he had received from that Government the day before, and the articles were purchased by a few speculators and Government employes, who had the kind of funds required, at one fourth of their value, and re-sold at enormous profits. I have now in my eye an honorable member from Mississippi, who had a near relative in that service, and who can vouch for the truth of these statements. Yes, sir, while your Government was professing to receive nothing, and had no right to receive any thing but gold and silver, or Treasury notes, and whilst the members of Congress were paid in one or the other, the soldier in your service was paid in a depreciated bank paper which, before the week was out, the same Government refused to receive from him. These facts, I have from unquestionable authority; I do not state them positively, for that I will not do, but on personal knowledge; but I have no earthly doubt of their truth.

Again, sir, you remember the lectures on economy which were so liberally read to us, when we proposed to print a public document of the utmost public importance, a report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the late defalcations, and at the very moment, by the leader of the party, in another body, there was a proposition to print, at the cost of at least thirty thousand dollars, not a document, but a book upon salt, a thing so utterly useless that if the resolution which passed that body by the votes of the party—the democratic party—the retrenchment party—comes into this House, I shall move to amend it, by striking out the book upon salt, and substituting Webster's spelling book, or Peter Parley's Tales; either will be more useful. But the printer of the House is not of the party—the printer of the Senate is.

I take no pleasure in these topics. If I had any personal or party malignity to gratify, I should forbear to do it; for the gratification that I should receive would be infinitely more than counterbalanced by the gloomiest forebodings for the future, from the reflection that these acts have been quietly submitted to, not in the old age and decrepitude of the republic, but in its youthful adolescence. The natural and unaided tendency of our system is to consolidation, and its proclivity, as recently developed to corruption, is dangerous and alarming. The allurements of office and the temptations which are held out to necessitous members of decayed,

but yet influential, families, with the immense patronage of the federal Executive, wielded as that patronage now is, by the greatest master in that way, since Sir Robert Walpole, and to whom he bears the most striking resemblance in every point of public and private character, makes the present crisis fearful and alarming. Of dissolution I never have had any fears. It never will, it never can happen. There is another and a greater danger—consolidation and the consequent increase of Executive power, and the universal corruption of the vitals of the body politic—until the whole mass becomes rotten and falls to pieces by its own corruption. General Jackson, who had many, very many points of a great man about him, unequalled sagacity, coolness, and a courage, moral and physical, which blenched at nothing, did more to change the principles of the Government than every man who has lived before him. He was born a despot—he was so by the natural constitution of his mind; still more was he so by habit and education. He was born to command, as has been said of him, and he did not disappoint his destiny—*jura neget sibi nata*. Loving power as he did from instinct as well as habit, it was natural that he should seek to destroy the power of all the co-ordinate branches of the Government, all those checks and balances provided by our wise forefathers—exactly in proportion as he did so he strengthened the power of the Executive. He struck no blow more insidious or more fatal than by a constant appeal to the people as his constituents against the other constituted authorities of the country—Make the Executive the direct representative of the people, and by whatever name you call it, your Government is a despotism.

I declare, in all sincerity, that I regard the present as an infinitely important epoch in the history of the country; involving, in my deliberate judgment, the question whether the President shall nominate his successor? The first step in the downward progress of all the Republics which have preceded us, as to forms of Government, they are not so important; I would rather have a despotism with the general spirit of liberty, than free institutions without that spirit. The forms of the Roman Republic remained, long after there was no vestige of Roman liberty left, nor was that liberty crushed by the all accomplished Julius, although he inflicted a deep wound upon it; yet its destruction was not consummated by that high and generous spirit. It was the wily and artful Augustus who finished the work which had been commenced, and by the most fatal process, the slow decay of insidious and gradual corruption. I have only to say, in conclusion, that from a careful and impartial review of the past, I can place no confidence in the pledges, however solemnly made by the party in power. I know of no single principle which they have carried out on pledge, that they have redeemed. If, contrary to all my expectations, they shall honestly carry out the principles which they profess, they shall have my votes for their measures, not for themselves. It may be, too, sir, that a state of things may occur, when I shall not support those who oppose them. If it does, I shall take a choice of evils. I shall endorse for neither, and expect my position still to be in the opposition, supporting the measures of the Administration when right, as I have heretofore done; but not, in the slightest degree, connecting myself with that Administration. I claim no sort of credit for this, sir, wholly independent as I am of Executive patronage and power, having no wish connected with public life but for the speedy termination of my own, and despising myself as I should, if I could exchange the service of such constituents as I have, for any office in the gift of any President.

All humble as I am, thanks to the noblest constituency that ever man had, I am here as an independent power; I am no man's man; I owe allegiance to no man; I have a *carte blanche* from my constituents to do whatever I think for the public good. And I well know that as long as I am faithful in the discharge of my duties, if I do err—as err I must—their kindness will forgive me. And if, sir, I could so

I forget what is due to myself, as to debase myself into a party or
 opinion and parasite, I have too much respect for them to do it. No, sir, I
 value this freedom too much, to barter it away. "I would not my u
 free condition, put into circumscription and confine, for the seas' worth."
 but one authority on earth to which I submit my public conduct, and
 now in willing and grateful homage, the authority of my constituents, and
 only felt in kindness and affection, as gentle, and as forgiving as a m



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